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FOR PRM A/S SAUERBREY
ALSO FOR G, NEA, PRM, CA AND S/I
CAIRO FOR DOETSCH
FROM REGIONAL REFCOORD AMMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2017
TAGS: [PREG](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR PRM A/S SAUERBREY'S MARCH 13-16
VISIT

REF: A. PRM/ANE DAR OF 03/06/07
[1](#)B. REIMER-GREENE EMAIL OF 03/02/07
[1](#)C. AMMAN 786
[1](#)D. AMMAN 703
[1](#)E. AMMAN 644

Classified By: CDA Daniel Rubinstein for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Embassy Amman welcomes your visit, and looks forward to building upon your discussions with key Jordanian officials and Ambassador Hale in recent days in Washington to advance our dialogue with the GOJ on the needs of Iraqis in Jordan, as well as the other refugee issues of mutual interest such as UNRWA programs for Palestinians. The government's anxiety about the Iraqi refugee issue remains high, and its impasse with UNHCR over the latter's decision to recognize Iraqis from south and central Iraq as prima facie refugees, which prompted UNHCR to suspend registration operations last week, remained unresolved at OOB March 8, although post understands that UNHCR official Radhounne Nouicer will be in Amman on March 12 to address this issue with the GOJ. Other issues are also changing the protection landscape; they are largely related to the confusion over the GOJ's willingness to recognize identification documents issued by the UN, and controversy over Iraqi passports. FM Khatib has offered to meet with UNHCR's team, and we can report positive movement on our assistance objectives. FAFO expects to sign an agreement with the GOJ March 12, and to start work on the first serious effort to survey the needs of Iraqis in Jordan that same day. This is a critical step in our efforts to secure Jordan's active participation in the April Geneva conference and to open "operational space" for our IO and NGO partners. END SUMMARY.

UPDATE ON PROTECTION ISSUES

[1](#)2. (C) PRESERVING FIRST ASYLUM: Post has been working to clarify a number of confusing reports that have emerged in recent weeks that suggest entry requirements may be evolving. The Director of the Minister of Interior's Office, Nasser Ramadeen, refuted to us local media reports that claim Jordan is on the verge of changing its visa-on-entry scheme and will soon require Iraqis to apply for Jordanian visas in Baghdad (as Egypt and Lebanon already require). Our MOI contacts uniformly confirm that the GOJ has followed our lead on

passports, and no longer accepts Iraq's old &S series8 due to the same security concerns which led the USG to adopt this measure.

¶3. (C) According to Embassy Amman's Iraq Support Unit, immigration officials at Jordan's airports are starting to enforce the new passport rules. However, our contacts at Jordan's one official land crossing with Iraq (Karama-Trebil) have told us that they are still accepting the "S" series passports, and are prepared to continue to do so until June ¶1. As previously reported in ref E, Jordan is not permitting entry to most unknown Iraqis between the ages of 18 and 35. Figures on entry and exit are becoming increasingly difficult to secure; the most current available are those reported in ref E. The understanding reached by the Ambassador with the GOJ last month to secure the entry to Jordan of 100 direct referrals from Embassy Baghdad to the US Refugee Admissions Program (see ref C) continues to function well.

¶4. (C) IDENTIFICATION: In addition to no longer being able to enter Jordan on an "S" series passport, consistent with the U.S.'s own procedures, Iraqis now require "G" series passports to regularize their status if they are already in Jordan. NOTE: According to UNHCR Jordan, the Interior Minister orally informed visiting UNHCR HC Guterres in February that approximately 150,000 of the Iraqis in Jordan were legal residents. END NOTE. While the Iraqi Embassy in Jordan has said that it will take applications for the new G series passports, there are also reports that it may be reneging on this promise. As in Syria, PRM's NGO partners report that a black market has emerged around this gap; couriers are now reportedly charging \$2,000 to travel to Baghdad to file an individual passport application. We understand that Jordan's MOI plans to engage the Iraqis on

this issue this week.

¶5. (C) DEVELOPMENTS ON UNHCR REGISTRATION: Over the last week, it has also become more difficult to determine whether identification documents issued by UNHCR are recognized forms of protection. The dispute over UNHCR's new registration practices and attestation letters (refs A-B) remains unresolved as of COB March 7, and UNHCR's decision to suspend registration also remains in effect, pending negotiations with the GOJ. We understand from UNHCR Jordan that Foreign Minister Al Khatib has offered UNHCR MENA Director Radhounne Nouicer a meeting the week of March 11. In the meantime, UNHCR's Jordan office is seeking GOJ permission to resume issuing letters using its pre-February 2007 text which identifies the bearer only as an asylum seeker -- as opposed to a refugee in its current attestation letter -- and which have a validity of six months in line with the UNHCR-Jordan MOU. According to UNHCR's senior protection officer, the Iraqi community is unaware of this dispute, and demand for UN identification, which started to rise steadily in 2005, remains high. UNHCR Jordan reports that most Iraqis who approach their offices have overstayed their permission to remain in Jordan, and are seeking identification that they believe will legalize their status. Prior to 2005, Jordan upheld a 2003 MOU that UNHCR negotiated in advance of the war that granted blanket "temporary protection" status to all Iraqis in country. END NOTE.

¶6. (C) ALLEGED RISE IN DEPORTATIONS AND DETENTIONS: UNHCR Jordan is also ramping up its efforts to investigate reports of detentions and deportations. It is concerned that senior MOI and MFA officials who convoked UNHCR Representative Breen on March 1 suggested in that meeting that the GOJ might begin treating the new attestation letters that UNHCR has issued to Iraqis in Jordan since February 6 as "null and void." Approximately 2,000 Iraqis in Jordan hold these disputed letters. Anna-Marie Deutschlander, UNHCR's Senior Protection Officer in Jordan, confirms two new cases of Iraqis holding the new attestation letters who have been deported from Jordan: one individual contacted UNHCR's hotline from the Jordan-Iraq "no man's land" on March 3. The second individual was deported from Queen Alia on March 5. UNHCR has requested information from the GOJ on these two cases but

has not yet received a response. This brings to five the total number of cases in which Iraqis holding UNHCR documentation were deported before UNHCR could confirm their refugee status in Jordan in 2007.

17. (C) Prior to this dispute, UNHCR's Jordan office had already alerted its headquarters in Geneva to what it considers to be a spike in detentions of Iraqis in Jordan. Although the GOJ has sometimes informed UNHCR Amman when it detained Iraqis bearing UNHCR documents, the GOJ is under no obligation to do so. Deutschlander told refcoord March 5 that UNHCR's most recent internal detention report confirmed 70 Iraqis registered with UNHCR had been detained from February 17 to March 1, out of a population of anywhere between 500,000 and 1 million. This is up from an average UNHCR detention investigation caseload of 20 cases per month over the previous 12 months. NOTE: The Jordanian legal aid NGO MIZAN plans to release a report on detention of Iraqi refugees in Jordan in 2006 within the next seven days. END NOTE. While UNHCR Amman has hired additional eligibility officers to conduct detention investigations on a full time basis to respond to this reported increase, its response time is constrained by the terms of UNHCR's bilateral MOU with the GOJ. Unlike ICRC, UNHCR can only access individual detainees after receiving written permission from MOI. UNHCR reports that MOI is taking four to five days to respond to their requests; prior to February, MOI response usually came within 48 hours. UNHCR thinks this is a simple caseload issue, and not a deliberate effort to impede access.

18. (C) The unintended consequence, however, is that UNHCR protection officers have discovered in a number of cases that Iraqis they have sought to interview have been moved to new facilities by the time access requests are granted. In addition, senior UNHCR staff in Jordan are watching what they believe may be a new pattern of detention. In 2006, the majority of Iraqis whose detention was investigated by UNHCR,

were found by UNHCR to have been arrested by local police on work or immigration violations. In the last two weeks, UNHCR has encountered several cases of Iraqis held by the General Intelligence Directorate. UNHCR reports that Iraqis held by GID are detained under an "administrative hold" category. As such, the GOJ is not obliged to inform UNHCR of the reasons for their detention. That said, UNHCR has successfully conducted interviews with two Iraqis detained by GID; those interviewed were Shi'a who believe they were detained for proselytizing. Deutschlander reports that MOI's Refugee Unit recently explained to her that the GOJ is detaining Iraqis increasingly on security grounds; her interlocutors reportedly told her the GOJ is concerned about forged passports, and are particularly worried by reports that a large number of "S" series Iraqi passports were issued to Iranian agents (ref C).

ASSISTANCE: CLOSING THE PERCEPTION GAP KEY TO OPENING
OPERATIONAL SPACE

19. (C) The reports that some refugee advocacy groups, NGOs working in Jordan, and the western media are starting to produce on the plight of vulnerable Iraqis in Jordan paint a picture that diverges widely from the perception of the GOJ, which views Jordan as a poor country, destabilized in the past by refugee flows, that has extended itself considerably for Iraqis (refs C-D). As reported in refs A-E, UNHCR has been unsuccessful to date in moving its discussions with the GOJ beyond its protection mandate towards a discussion on the role international assistance could play. Some senior UN officials based in Amman, including UN Deputy SRSG for Iraq Jean-Marie Fakhouri (whose humanitarian mandate the UN recently expanded to include neighboring states), are likely to tell you that the GOJ is actively working with the GOI to secure "safe havens" inside Iraq to preclude the need for more population movements to Jordan. As we reported on February 14 (ref B), the GOJ has assured Post that it will allow Iraqis to access essential services as national resources permit, and we are seeking meetings with the

Ministers of Education and Health during your visit to pursue that opening.

¶10. (C) PROSPECTS JORDAN WILL JOIN THE APRIL CONFERENCE: A key question is whether Jordan will ask for those resources in Geneva in April. Further to ref A, UNHCR Jordan reports that senior officials from the MFA International Organization Department and the Ministry of Health have both declined to respond to UNHCR's request for an estimate of the impact Iraqis are having on the GOJ, or specific sectoral proposals, until basic differences over registration are resolved. Importantly, however, FAFO's Middle East Coordinator Age Tiltne told refcoord March 7 that he expects to sign a formal agreement with the GOJ on March 12 that will enable FAFO and its Jordanian partner (the GOJ Bureau of Statistics) to commence work the week of your visit. Separately, Norway's Ambassador to Jordan told refcoord March 6 that her government has responded positively to Jordan's request for funding for this survey. NOTE: Tiltne reports that FAFO-SARG negotiations to conduct a similar household survey are still ongoing. END NOTE.

¶11. (C) SOME JORDANIANS RAISING CREDIBILITY OF GOJ STUDY: Some Jordanians are calling for the GOJ to take additional steps to ensure the FAFO mission succeeds. Jordanian Red Crescent Society President Dr. Al Hadid told visiting PRM/ANE Director Albright February 22 (see septel for full trip report) that he is concerned that Iraqis will fear that cooperation with FAFO will result in their deportation, and is urging the GOJ to issue a "public amnesty." Jordanian editorialist Fahd Al Khaytan issued a public call for the GOJ to stop deporting Iraqis who do not pose a security risk, and "exempt Iraqis who have violated the terms and conditions of their residency from paying fines before the Norwegian organization starts its work" on March 6.

¶12. (C) LIMITED INFORMATION ON VULNERABILITY: The FAFO study getting underway is the first serious assessment of the conditions Iraqis are facing in Jordan. Little accurate information on their economic and social conditions) and

the extent of poverty, child labor and forced prostitution, if any - among Iraqis in Jordan is currently available. Rapid assessments carried out by NGOs who are actively supporting Iraqis in Jordan confirm these problems are present, but most of the survey work is dated, and mapping work is too limited to credibly estimate the size of the population that is extremely vulnerable. In the study that CARE International carried out for UNHCR in late 2003, from a random sample of 3200 Iraqi respondents, 45% were found to include unaccompanied minor status, female headed-households, unaccompanied elderly, mentally disabled and individuals having a medical or psychological condition needing intervention. Most NGOs, including PRM's current assistance partner for vulnerable Iraqis in the region, ICMC, report that refugees' economic status is changing: over time poorer groups are arriving and those in country are increasingly relying on remittances from the diaspora as undocumented labor carries a risk of deportation.

¶13. (C) ACCESS AND NEED FOR NGO ADVOCACY: Data on the numbers of Iraqis who are accessing GOJ services is also limited. The best information currently available emerged from UNHCR HC Guterres' visit to Jordan in February. According to UNHCR Jordan, an official at the Ministry of Education orally informed Guterres that there were 40,000 foreign students in Jordanian schools in 2006, of which 12,000 are Iraqis. Of that number, 9,000 are in private schools. However, due to continuous amendments to its admissions policies, it appears that many of the 3,000 Iraqis who were enrolled in public schools are now being asked to leave, according to Iraqis refcoord interviewed, caseworkers with PRM's ICMC "EVI" project, and UNHCR staff in Jordan. Many Iraqis who were successful in enrolling their children in public schools at the start of year promised to present evidence of legal residency; several months into the school year they are being forced to withdraw their children, according to caseworkers with our ICMC/Caritas Jordan EVI project and Save the

Children USA. Given the GOJ's very real resource constraints and overcrowding in public schools, distance learning via satellite broadcast, combined with standardized testing that will be recognized, may be faster short term options.

¶14. (C) NGOs operating in Jordan my address some of the health needs of vulnerable displaced Iraqis, but lack the capacity to educate those Iraqi children who are currently not attending school in Jordan. Numerous NGOs are conducting rapid assessments in Jordan to respond to PRM's request for proposals. However, many are not registered in Jordan and could require advocacy with the GOJ. It may be feasible to encourage GOJ streamlining of its registration processes with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, or seek permission to allow NGOs to operate under the offices of a Jordanian group like the Hashemite Charitable Organization, which continues to manage UNHCR's one remaining border camp.

UNHCR RESETTLEMENT WORK PROCEEDING NORMALLY

¶15. (C) While UNHCR registration activities are suspended, the agency's resettlement work is proceeding normally, according to UNHCR Jordan's representative. UNHCR is using the time it would normally devote to registering Iraqis to conduct in-depth training for the 18 new registration staff UNHCR has hired in Jordan. UNHCR reports that crowd reaction to the suspension has been muted, due largely to UNHCR's decision to blame the suspension on technical problems associated with UNHCR's computers. UNHCR has made efforts to call all Iraqis who had scheduled registration appointments to assure them that they would be given priority when operations were resumed. UNHCR believes that it can make up the 300 appointments it has been unable to conduct this week comparatively quickly now that registration staff are fully trained. Positive results from the recent DHS circuit ride, particularly news that the U.S. might accept Palestinians from Iraq who were admitted to Jordan in 2003 to USRAP, will be received positively and may help to defuse UNHCR-GOJ tensions.

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